

United States Senate

September 20, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Since 2003, our nation has sent hundreds of thousands of our men and women to fight in Iraq. We have done so at an enormous cost -- 4,474 Americans have given their lives. More than 32,000 others have been wounded. And we can't put a number on those who suffer from injuries unseen. The price tag for taxpayers is quickly approaching \$1 trillion, and we have lost tens of billions of dollars in waste and fraud.

This war began with political leaders who had their own agenda. But through it all, the professionalism of our military never faltered. They performed and continue to perform with incredible bravery and skill in some of the toughest conditions imaginable. Many of my constituents in the Montana National Guard have served there on two or more separate occasions. Our entire state is deeply proud of their service. But is time for us to bring our troops home from Iraq for good.

As you know, the Status of Forces Agreement that establishes the legal framework under which U.S. armed forces operate within Iraq will expire on December 31. As that deadline draws near, some have raised questions regarding the size and extent of our future military presence in Iraq. Our troops should not be in harm's way simply to prolong the inaction of Iraqi politicians. A clear military finish line on our part will force Iraq's leaders to step up to the plate and take full responsibility for their own future.

Recent reports of ongoing sectarian violence across Iraq are certainly troubling. However, the continued deployment of a substantial U.S. military presence serves no purpose if the Iraqi government lacks the fortitude to resolve the issues that continue to stoke the flames of a centuries-old civil war. We should not continue to deploy American troops to referee an internal conflict that is likely to continue into the distant future regardless of our military presence.

In Iraq, our troops have helped secure the conditions in which a democratically elected government can govern. They have also helped lay the foundations by which Iraqi security forces can effectively secure their own communities and resources and defend their nation from outside threats. While I understand that some Iraqi politicians believe more time is needed for their country's institutions to become fully self-functioning, it is long past time for the Iraqi people to demonstrate that they are committed to finding solutions to secure their own future. In

turn, it is time that we devote more of our resources toward reducing our own national debt and to rebuilding our own economy.

By the end of this year, all U.S. Operation New Dawn troops need to come home. They should not be in Iraq one minute more than is necessary.

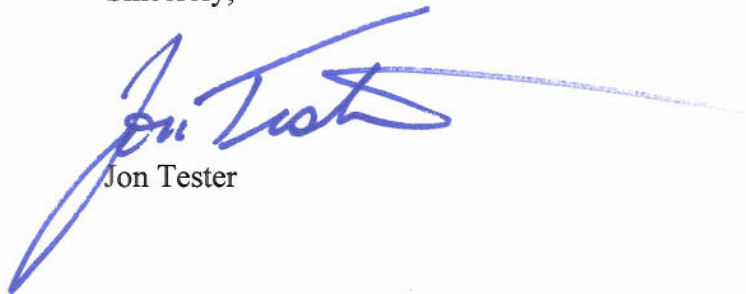
It is my understanding that the U.S. and Iraqi governments are currently discussing a possible extension of the U.S. military commitment, but I strongly believe that at this point, a prolonged presence of U.S. military assets in Iraq would do nothing more than put our troops in more danger, cost American taxpayers more and further distract us from our core national security objectives of protecting American citizens and further dismantling al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

American troops are already engaged in conflicts around the world and through selfless acts of courage and valor, they have accomplished everything that was ever asked or expected of them. It is time we honor their service and sacrifice by doing what is right by them and their families, and start pursuing a strategy in Iraq that has a clear end in sight and is more consistent with our economic and national security interests.

That is where our focus needs to be. Mr. President, let's end this war for good.

I appreciate your time and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester